

## Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Hearing entitled "Diminished Capacity: Can the FDA Assure the Safety and Security of the Nation's Food Supply? - Part III"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
HEARING ENTITLED, "DIMINISHED CAPACITY: CAN THE FDA ASSURE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE  
NATION'S FOOD SUPPLY? - PART III"  
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Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing and for conducting an excellent and far-reaching investigation into the Administration's effectiveness in addressing the food safety challenges our country now faces. As we have seen in prior hearings, food safety affects us all, but it is particularly dangerous to the most vulnerable -- the poor, the very young, the very old, and those with compromised immune systems.

Today, we focus on food imports not only from China, but also from other countries with regulatory systems that are not equivalent or even close to ours. Importing food from such countries is risky to start with, and even more dangerous if the resources for the regulatory agencies entrusted with ensuring their safety are meager and their management passive or ineffective.

Mr. Chairman, we sent Committee staff to China to help us understand whether importing food from that country made sense, given the spate of recent incidents involving tainted food imports.

By sending Committee staff to look at these problems first hand, we have gained insights that are unique from other Congressional committees now looking at food import safety. I look forward to the staff testimony today.

I am interested in the analysis of our expert witnesses, Mr. Rice and Dr. Martin, regarding the regulatory efforts of Hong Kong and Japan, which import a substantial amount of their food from China, similar to the United States.

The Subcommittee will also hear from representatives of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) -- the primary regulatory agencies that ensure the safety of our food imports.

I look forward to comparing and contrasting their budgets and their efforts.

I especially look forward to hearing from USDA regarding its efforts to protect Americans from contaminated beef, pork, chicken, and eggs. I understand that their system is far more selective as to who can import into this country and from where, and that USDA inspects a far larger portion of the imports that they are responsible for regulating than does the FDA.

Most of all, I look forward to the testimony of the FDA witnesses today. Two weeks ago, when the FDA was called in to discuss food safety in the context of the bill that Chairman Stupak and I introduced -- H.R. 3610 -- they sent one of the least-prepared witnesses to ever testify before this Committee. That FDA official, Dr. Lutter, repeatedly told us that he was ignorant of the most basic facts regarding the food import crisis. I trust we will not have a repeat of that today.

I also trust that the FDA witnesses are not going to try to sell that old, oft-repeated falsehood that "We can do more with less." FDA needs resources to deal with the cavalcade of imports from China and other countries that cannot or will not assure the quality of their food imports to the United States. I intend to see that FDA gets the additional budget that it so sorely needs.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I understand that you intend to hold hearings in November dealing with the safety of drug imports and the inadequate regulation of our domestic food supply. I endorse your plans and commend you for doing so.

Our bill addresses both of these matters, as well as provides the crucial resources necessary to strengthen import protection. I expect that the hearings both today and in the near future will help us to refine the legislation. I have always found that legislation informed by the work of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations makes for better law and better public policy.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce  
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